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CORWIN

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CORWIN

INTRODUCTION

Clarke is a new student who is very excited and a bit nervous about the new school. Clarke attended a rural, or as they say, “country school,” for several years. You find out Clarke’s father is a well-known farmer who is taking a role at the corporate office in the city. Clarke has worked on the farm for years and has lots of stories about equipment, animals, and crops. Clarke is especially fond of milk cows and wrote about the taste of fresh milk during a quick write. On the second day of attending the new school, someone realizes Clarke has a knife on the back of their belt.

Given your current school or district rules, what are you required to do? What course of action is required of you? Clearly, a rule has been broken and Clarke created an unsafe environment. As we will explore throughout this book, a punitive approach focused on the following questions:

- What law or rule was broken?
- Who broke it?
- What punishment is deserved?

In this case, Clarke clearly violated an important rule related to school safety. The question then is, what is the punishment? In many places, Clarke would be suspended. In some places, Clarke might even be expelled. After all, there was a knife on campus that created an unsafe place to learn. Some will argue that Clarke will only learn if there are exclusionary consequences for this action.

Do you agree with this course of action, given what you know about Clarke? What do you wish would happen differently? We shared this example because we hope you are thinking that there is a much simpler solution and one that will likely ensure that Clarke learns not to bring a knife to school. But the situations you encounter are often much more complex than this. And they deserve the same type of investigation as to the *why* before considering a course of action.

Before we continue, let’s consider another example. Nancy is at the airport and security pulls her bag from the line. They ask if there was anything sharp in her bag and Nancy replies, “No,” not remembering that she had been helping a friend over the weekend and has a utility knife in her bag. Of course, security finds it and shows it to her. She apologizes profusely and then is suspended from flying ever again. Okay, the suspension part’s not true. But they do ask if she wants to check the utility knife or throw it away. Once the problem is solved, they let her go on her way.

We are not advocating for weapons on campus (or airplanes) any more than we support students being disrespectful to teachers. But there are ways to ensure that students learn from the mistakes that they make. We are educators and our primary role is to teach. When students have unfinished learning, educators create opportunities for students to learn. Unfortunately, too often that role seems to stop when it comes to behavior:

If a student doesn't know how to read,
We teach that student how to read.

If a student doesn't know how to do math problems,
We teach that student to do math.

If a student doesn't know how to behave,
We punish that student.

Where is the teachable moment? Isn't that why we entered this most noble profession? To teach. That's what restorative practices are about. In this book, we focus on a set of practices that are designed to teach. That must include teaching prosocial behaviors based on strong relationships and a commitment to the well-being of others.



Before we continue, it's important to clear up a confusion. We have been asked far too many times, *What about consequences? Are there ever consequences for the actions that students take? What if they hurt someone? What if they destroy property?*

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Restorative practices are about healing. They are about re-establishing the learning environment. Of course, there are consequences. That may even include time away from school for calming down and making plans. We just understand that some of the traditional consequences that schools use do not result in any new learning.

Doug's high school English teacher was frustrated with one of Doug's writing assignments. In front of the whole class, the teacher told Doug that he would spend the rest of his life "flipping burgers." Frustrated and hurt, Doug threw a pencil at the wall and walked out of class.

He was then sent to the principal, who asked if Doug had done what was written on the referral, which he admitted. Doug was suspended for three days. No one at school asked Doug why he did it. What did Doug learn from this suspension? Well, one thing he learned was to never trust that teacher. Doug missed that class a lot after that day but made up the grade in the summer. The hurt and lack of belief that the teacher showed were never addressed. Perhaps the teacher intended something else and a quick conversation could have resolved the feelings. Perhaps the teacher had not considered the impact of a statement made in frustration and a conversation could have enlightened that

teacher. What if Doug had heard that his actions scared the teacher and had a chance to learn about the impact of his actions? Why were so many opportunities missed? Opportunities to spend time figuring out what went wrong, why, and how to resolve it.

So where do we start? How might we create restorative classrooms and schools? It starts with *why*. But, although we could, we are not going to provide you with an extensive literature review about the impact of restorative practices. We don't find that as compelling as asking you: What is your *why*? When you find your *why*, you will know how restorative practices can help you accomplish your vision.

Simon Sinek's "Start With Why" is among the most-watched TED Talks. His message is clear: your *why* is what drives you and gives you purpose. So, what is your *why*? When is the last time you thought about it? Consider the following prompts. Take some time to reflect and add your own thoughts.



RESTORATIVE
PRACTICES ARE
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THEY ARE ABOUT
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Why did you become an educator?	
What makes you a great teacher or leader?	
What do you hope for your students?	
What goals do you have for yourself as an educator?	

We have asked countless numbers of people a simple but most meaningful question: *Why are you an educator?* Again and again, individuals light up and tell us their *why* with a story:

- For the kids
- To be the adult I never had
- To be just like my third-grade teacher who saved my life
- To fight for students with disabilities because my brother didn't have a chance
- To make a difference in the lives of others
- To showcase that learning is fun
- To share science in a way it has never been seen before
- To allow *all* voices to be heard
- To help create the next generation
- To see a student's eyes light up when they finally get it
- To change lives
- My family were all educators and I knew I could make a difference
- To give students a person they can count on

As we read these *whys* and reflect on our own, we see a trend. Educators come into this profession for the love, care, and ongoing growth of students. These are known as the moral rewards of teaching. And they are a powerful force for satisfaction in our roles and the generally positive feelings we have about our chosen work.



WHAT MIGHT BE
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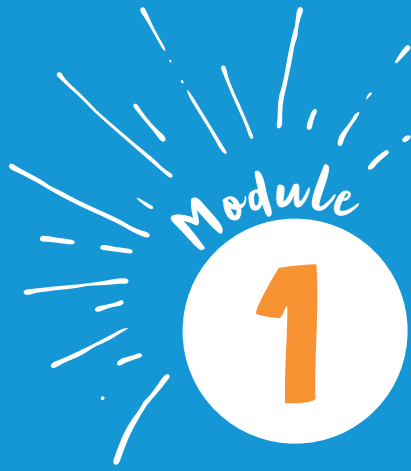
Dominique's *why* has always been *to be that adult who doesn't leave*. In part, restorative practices allow him to realize his *why*. Far too often, adults leave when students get in trouble. What might be different if the valued adults in a young person's life remained and worked through the trouble? What if we came to understand that exclusionary practices prevent us from realizing our *why*? That there are more effective ways for building, maintaining, and repairing relationships. And that there are rewards that come from watching students learn how to navigate the complex words of social skills and relationships. As Dominique says,

I get to listen to students.

I get to hear their stories.

I get to ensure that students have another chance.

Importantly, restorative practices are not just a way to create long-term change in students. These practices are fortifying for you, the educator, who has the opportunity to address the intentional and unintentional harm that inevitably comes from supporting the development of other humans. In part, restorative practices allow you to have your say, to provide others an opportunity to make amends, and for you to leave school feeling good about your accomplishments.



THE LOGIC OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES



BELIEF STATEMENT

The foundation of restorative practices is a school culture that actively invests in relationships among students, staff, and the community.